



New University Clubhouse Mansfield Rd Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

March 2003

**Client Name: Oxford University
Surveyor's Office**

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 1650

Planning Ref N^o: 01/01725/FUL

NGR: SP 5175 0608

Client Name: Oxford University Surveyors Office
Client Ref No:
Document Title: New University Cubhouse, Mansfield Rd, Oxford
Document Type: Watching Brief
Issue Number: 1
National Grid Reference: SP 5175 0608
Planning Reference: 01/01725/FUL
OA Job Number: 1650
Site Code: OXMAUC 03
Invoice Code: OXMAUCEX
Receiving Museum: Ashmolean
Museum Accession No: 2001.80

Prepared by: Adam Brossler
Position: Project Officer
Date: 28th February 2003

Checked by: Dan Poore
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 4th March 2003

Approved by: Paul Booth
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 17th March 2003

Signed



Document File Location \\server1\projects\OXMAUCEX_NEW UNI CLUB
MANSFIELD ROAD\WB report.doc
Graphics File Location OAU pubs 1\server 10\ to Qinvoice codes\OXMAUCEX
Illustrated by Luke Adams

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology
© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2003

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

New University Club House, Mansfield Road, Oxford***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*****CONTENTS**

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work	1
1.2 Geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	1
1.4 Acknowledgements	2
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	2
2.1 Aims	2
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 Results	3
3.2 Description of deposits.....	3
3.3 Finds	4
3.4 Palaeo-environmental remains	5
4 Discussion And Conclusions	5
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	6
Appendix 2 Finds Assessments.....	7
The Pottery	7
The Flint	8
The Animal Bone	9
Appendix 3 Bibliography	10
Appendix 4 Summary of Site Details.....	10

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	Site plan of area of watching brief
Figure 3	Section through Civil War ditch 405
Figure 4	Detail of northern end of Section 305
Figure 5	General view of ditch 405 and associated bank (south facing)

SUMMARY

In January and February 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at New University Club House, Mansfield Road, Oxford (NGR SP 5175 0608). The work was commissioned by The University Surveyor's Office in advance of the construction of a new clubhouse. The watching brief revealed the presence of part of the inner Civil War defences in the form of a ditch and associated bank.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In January and February 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the site of the old University Club House, Mansfield Road, Oxford, SP 5175 0608 (Figure 1); the site is also known as The King's Mound (see below). The work was commissioned by The University Surveyor's Office (USO) in respect of a planning application for the demolition of the old clubhouse and construction of a new one (Planning Application No. 01/01725/FUL).

1.1.2 The development site is located on the north edge of the historic core of Oxford, and on the line of Oxford's Civil War defences. The site is bounded to the north by the Institute of Virology, to the west by Mansfield Road, to the south by a large 19th-century building known as 'King's Mound', and to the east by a playing field leading to St. Cross Road.

1.1.3 Oxford City's Archaeological Advisor, Brian Durham, did not issue a brief for this work. However, discussions between OA, Mr Durham and the USO formed the basis of a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by OA, which detailed how the requirements of the brief would be met (OA 2003).

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site lies on the Second Terrace gravels, which cap the Oxford Clay, and is at 60 m OD. It is situated on the eastern side of Mansfield Road and the area of impact, i.e. the area investigated, measured 0.25 hectares. Prior to construction it contained a clubhouse, car park and part of a playing field. It is flat, with a sharp slope and slight bank at the southern limit which effectively divides two terraces; the playing field to the south is at a slightly higher level.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was summarised in the WSI (OA 2003) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 Evidence of Romano-British agricultural and domestic activity has been seen at Mansfield College and the new Institute for American Studies (Booth and Hayden 2000), and was recently excavated by Oxford Archaeology at the New Chemistry Research Laboratory (Charles *et al* in prep.); both sites lie to the north-west of the current proposal area. There is little archaeological evidence for the Anglo-Saxon or

medieval periods in the vicinity of the site. This fits with the historical information, which suggests that this area was still farmland beyond the city boundaries during these periods.

- 1.3.3 Excavations at Mansfield College, to the north-west of the development site, revealed a 7 m wide, east-west aligned Civil War defensive ditch. It ran to the north of, and parallel to, the contemporary standing earthwork immediately to the east of Rhodes House (Bell 1993). Excavations at the New Chemistry Research Laboratory have revealed a length of the outer circuit of the defensive ditch (Charles *et al* in prep.), which matches the drawing designed to show the predicted line of the defences (Ashdown and Hassall 1975, 141). The fortifications on the north side of Oxford were the first to be constructed in 1642, but were destroyed when Oxford fell into Parliamentary hands. Works were recommenced when the city was retaken by Charles I on 3rd November 1642. The interpretative plan showing the Civil War Defences in relation to the topography of the modern city (*ibid*), suggests that the scarp defining the boundary between the two playing fields to the south-east is an earthwork that linked the inner and outer circuit of the defences at this point. The mound (known as the King's Mound) within the proposal area (Figure 2) appears to be part of the inner circuit (*ibid*).
- 1.3.4 There appears to have been no significant post-medieval building in the vicinity of the development site until the construction of residences and University buildings in the nineteenth century. The building to the south of the site known as 'King's Mound' was constructed in 1893 and is the residence of the Master of Balliol College.
- 1.3.5 The site was evaluated by OA (then OAU) in April 2001 (OAU 2001). Three trenches were excavated. The evaluation revealed an undated curvilinear ditch, thought likely to be prehistoric (but now revealed as part of the Civil War defences; see below). Modern services and tree roots obstructed excavations designed to locate features associated with the extant earthwork known as 'Kings Mound', a Civil War defensive feature adjacent to the site. Terracing on the site was investigated and found to be a result of landscaping for the current playing field.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Thanks are extended to Bluestone PLC for their co-operation during the watching brief and to Mr Brian Durham (Oxford City Council).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To seek evidence for prehistoric monuments such as those observed as cropmarks in the University Parks to the north and the barrow excavated just to the south-east of there, at the Rex Richards Building (Parkinson *et al* 1996).

- 2.1.3 To seek evidence for land surfaces which may provide further information on the construction of the monuments.
- 2.1.4 To seek evidence for Romano-British agricultural and domestic activity and to relate it to the activity recorded in the investigations to the north at Mansfield College and the New Chemistry Building.
- 2.1.5 To seek evidence for Saxon or medieval activity, which is to date very limited.
- 2.1.6 To seek evidence for Civil War defences, their construction, layout and management.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The original clubhouse was demolished and its foundations were removed.
- 2.2.2 The current surface level within the footprint of the new building, and for adjacent landscaping, was reduced by 0.20 - 0.30 m, onto a subsoil overlying the natural gravels (also known as the 'supra-natural').
- 2.2.3 In the northern area of the excavation a series of 15 pile cuts were excavated through the subsoil into the gravels. A north-west - south-east trench was excavated for services (Figure 2).
- 2.2.4 Excavations for a staircase in the southern area, excavated to 3 m below current surface levels, impacted into a bank forming the southern limit of the site (see below).
- 2.2.5 All work was carried out under close archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.6 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:200 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

- 3.1.1 The following section comprises a detailed description of the archaeological remains at the site and includes individual context descriptions, with deposits and features described from earliest to latest. The archaeology is shown in plan and section, where appropriate (see figures at back of report). Context information is summarised in the context inventory (Appendix 1).

3.2 Description of deposits

- 3.2.1 The natural gravels were only noted in the pile cuts and service trench. They were overlain by the subsoil (402), a mixed silty-clay deposit that contained 30% rounded gravel inclusions. This was cut by a large ditch (405) (see below) and sealed by layers of subsoil (401) and turf (400), which both contained pottery dating to the 19th century.

- 3.2.2 A straight, east-west aligned ditch (405) was found at the southern limit of the site (Figure 2). It measured 23 m in length, 5.80 m in width and 1.35 m in depth. The sides of the ditch were 45°, breaking to a flat base (Figure 3). Immediately to the south of the ditch was a bank, visible as an earthwork prior to excavation (see Section 1.2.1). There was no clear division between the break of slope of the ditch onto the bank, which formed a continuous slope. The bank (414) was 1.20 m high with an angle of slope of 45°, and appeared to have been constructed using the subsoil (402), a natural deposit which overlays the gravel, and which would have been upcast during the excavation of ditch 405. The top of the bank appeared to have been capped with a layer of gravel, again probably upcast during the excavation of the ditch.
- 3.2.3 The ditch contained six fills. The fills (406, 409-13) appear to represent dumping and erosion into the feature. Fills 411 - 413 were gravelly loams and appear to represent slumping of the sides not long after the feature was first excavated. Fill 410 was a thick reddish-brown, sandy-silt that filled a large area of the ditch, and contained pottery dating from 1550 - 1700. It may represent deliberate dumping - ditch 405 would have appeared as a shallow linear depression at this stage in the fill sequence. Fill 409, which overlay 410, was a dark brown humic, sandy-silt. The deposit appears to a turfline that has built-up in the surviving hollow. Another possible interpretation is that 409 is the primary fill of a re-cut of the ditch (see Figure 3),. The final fill of the ditch (406), a reddish brown gravelly sand-silt, probably derived from a combination of slumping from the adjacent bank and ploughing of the area in the post-Civil War period. Fill 406 was in turn overlain by material (408) which appears to have slumped from the sides and top of the bank once the ditch was filled; 408 was in turn overlain by the modern topsoil (407).
- 3.2.4 The bank and ditch form part of the Civil War defences which encircled Oxford during the mid-17th century; the evidence for a re-cut perhaps dates from a phase of re-modelling of the defences (see Section 4 below).
- 3.2.5 The site appears to have been landscaped to create the present sports field. It appears that the original soils were truncated and terraced to form a series of level surfaces. This is indicated by the higher level of the ground surface in the adjoining playing field to the south of the site. A series of modern post-holes or pits were observed in the centre of the site (404).

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 A total of 10 struck flints as well as Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery, and animal bone, were recovered from the surface of the subsoil (402).
- 3.3.2 A very small quantity of flint was recovered from ditch fills 406 and 410 (see Appendix 2). Pottery dating to the Roman, medieval and post-medieval period was recovered from fills 406 and 410.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.4.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The worked flints collected from the surface of the subsoil indicate prehistoric activity in the area. Previous excavations in the surrounding area have revealed a number of prehistoric features including barrow ditches, which have been dated to the Bronze Age. These features have been located at University Parks, to the north of the current site, and at the Sackler Library and St Michael's Street, to the south-west (Poore and Wilkinson 2001, fig. 13, 28).
- 4.1.2 The ditch and associated earthwork is of local significance, being part of the complex of Civil War defences that are known to have existed in this part of Oxford during the Civil War (Figures 4 and 5). Ditch 405 appears to act as a partition between the inner and outer line of defences (Ashdown and Hassall 1975, 141), which may explain why the height of the bank is significantly lower in this area than that identified during previous excavations (see 4.1.3).
- 4.1.3 Excavations in 1992 and 1998-9 in Mansfield College, to the west, have revealed further sections of the Civil War defences. Works undertaken in 1992 identified the western continuation of ditch 405, along with an associated bank. The ditch, again located to the north of the bank, measured 7 m in width and 2 m in depth. The bank measured 2.40 m in height (Bell 1993).
- 4.1.4 In 1998-9 excavation at Mansfield College identified a north-south orientated section of the inner Civil War defensive ditch. The full width of the ditch was not identified during the works; its excavated width measured 3.40 m and it was 1.40-1.50 m. The sides were at an angle of $c 45^\circ$ and broke onto a flat base (Booth and Hayden 2000, 306). A noteworthy point is that the upper fills of the ditch were dark-brown, sandy silts, similar to the upper fills of 405. Pottery of 18th-century date was recovered from the deliberate upper backfills of the ditch.
- 4.1.5 Excavations in 2001 at the adjacent site of the New Chemistry Research Laboratory revealed the presence of part of the outer Civil War defensive ditch. The was significantly larger, measuring 10 m in width and 2.60 m in depth (Charles *et al* in prep.).
- 4.1.6 Other archaeological actions close to Mansfield Road have noted parts of the defences. A watching brief at New College Sports Ground at St Cross Road, to the east of Mansfield Road, identified part of the ditch that formed the outer city defences. The ditch was not fully excavated, but was seen in plan. It measured 6 m in width (Dalton 1999).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
400	Layer	0.20 m	-	Turf layer	
401	Layer	0.20 m	-	Sub-soil	Pottery Animal bone
402	Layer	0.30 m	-	Super-natural	Pottery Worked flint Animal bone
403	Fill	0.10 m	-	Modern fill	
404	Cut	0.10 m	-	Series of modern cuts	
405	Cut	1.35 m	5.80 m	Civil War defensive ditch	
406	Fill	0.20 m	3.60 m	Uppermost fill of 405	Pottery Worked flint Animal bone
407	Layer	0.38 m	-	Topsoil on bank	
408	Layer	0.18 m	-	Subsoil on bank	
409	Fill	0.40 m	2.80 m	Humic fill	Animal bone
410	Fill	1.10 m	3.80 m	Fill of 405	Pottery Worked flint Animal bone
411	Fill	0.25 m	2.90 m	Fill of 405 (slumping)	
412	Fill	0.20 m	2.95 m	Fill of 405 (slumping)	
413	Fill	0.05 m	3.10 m	Fill of 405 (primary slumping)	
414	Layer	-	-	Bank deposit	
415	Layer	-	-	subsoil (same as 402)	

APPENDIX 2 FINDS ASSESSMENTS

THE POTTERY

by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 84 sherds with a total weight of 786 g. The range of fabric types present indicates that there was activity at the site from around the Norman conquest to the present day, and five sherds (58 g) sherds of Romano-British pottery were also noted. Most of the pottery was redeposited in post-medieval features.

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

- OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 2 sherds, 7 g.
 OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 1 sherd, 4 g.
 OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 1 sherd, 2 g.
 OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 21 sherds, 160 g.
 OXST: Frechen Stoneware, AD1550 – 1700. 4 sherds, 41 g.
 OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 9 sherds, 205 g.
 OXCE: Tin-glazed Earthenware, 1613 – 1800. 1 sherd, 2 g.
 OXFM: Staffordshire White-glazed English Stoneware, 1730 – 1800. 5 sherds, 33 g.
 CRM: Creamware, mid 18th - early 19th C. 8 sherds, 54 g.
 OXPW: Pearlwares, 1770+. 3 sherds, 18 g.
 WHEW: mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 24 sherds, 202 g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Cntxt	RB		OXA C		OXY		OXB F		OXAM		OXS T		OXDR		OXC E		OXF M		CRM		OXP W		WHEW		Date
	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	N	W	
401	3	40							17	130	1	17	3	54	1	2	5	33	7	36	3	18	20	180	19thC
402													4	127					1	18			4	22	19thC
402							1	4																	M11th C?
402			1	2	1	2																			L11thC ?
406	2	18	1	5					4	30	2	18	2	24											M16th C?
410											1	6													L15thC
Total	5	58	2	7	1	2	1	4	21	160	4	41	9	205	1	2	5	33	8	54	3	18	24	202	

THE FLINT

by Kate Cramp

An assemblage comprising 11 struck flints and one fragment of burnt unworked flint (2 g) was recovered from the site (Table 2). Most of the flints (ten pieces or 83.3%) were retrieved from context 402.

Table 2: Flint by type and by context.

Category:	Context:			Total:
	402	406	410	
Flake	6	1	1	8
Irregular waste	1			1
Retouched flake	2			2
Burnt unworked flint	1			1
Total:	10	1	1	12

The material is not in a particularly good condition. A total of eight pieces exhibit a moderate degree of post-depositional edge damage, which implies that considerable redeposition has occurred. None were recorded as fresh. With two exceptions (context 402 and 406), all the flints are uncorticated.

The raw material represented by the assemblage appears to be a gravel-derived flint, characterised by a stained and abraded cortex. The nodules may have been procured from river gravel deposits.

The assemblage is dominated by unretouched flakes (8 pieces), the majority of which are technologically undiagnostic. A broad Neolithic or Bronze Age date would be appropriate for this group.

The retouched component consists of two edge-retouched flakes, both from context 402. One of these consists of a blade-like tertiary flake, broken distally, with a small area of retouch to the proximal left-hand edge. The blank was probably struck using a soft-hammer percussor and exhibits platform edge abrasion. This piece probably dates to the Neolithic or earlier Bronze Age, but would be equally consistent with a Mesolithic industry. The other example has been manufactured on a side-trimming flake and has an area of light retouch to the distal edge. Again, a Neolithic or Bronze Age date is considered most likely for this piece.

THE ANIMAL BONE

by Bethan Charles

A total of 33 fragments (380g) of animal bone was recovered. Some of the fragments, mainly fragmented ribs, were reassembled reducing the fragment count to 18.

The bone was in good condition with a small amount of attritional damage.

Six fragments were positively identified to species and included a horse tarsal bone, cattle metapodials and a fragment of tibia and a fragment of sheep/goat metatarsal and part of a rib. All the elements apart from the horse fragment had evidence of butchery cut and chop marks. Additional cut marks were observed on both the medium and large unidentified fragments.

Table 3. Total number of fragments according to context and species.

Context	Horse	Cattle	Sheep/Goat	Medium	Large	Total
401			1	3	2	6
402		1			2	3
406		1			4	5
409	1	1				2
410			1	1		2
Total	1	3	2	4	9	18

A single split shaft fragment of large animal bone, possibly a fragment of cattle radius, appears to have been shaped into a point. It is possible that this is a fragment of worked bone used as an awl or puncher. However, this is not certain and it may represent butchered refuse.

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ashdown, J and Hassall, T, 1975 Oxford, in K Rodwell (ed) *Historic Towns of Oxfordshire*, 133 - 146
- Bell, C, 1993 Oxford, Mansfield College, Civil War defences. CBA Group 9 *South Midlands Archaeology* 23, 75
- Booth, P and Hayden, C, 2000 A Roman settlement at Mansfield College, Oxford, *Oxoniensia* 65, 291-331
- Charles, B, Hardy, A and Poore, D, in preparation Prehistoric and Roman activity and a Civil War Ditch: excavations at the New Chemistry and Molecular Science laboratory, 2-4 South Parks Road, Oxford, *Oxoniensia*
- Dalton, J 1999 New College Sports Ground, St Cross Rd, Oxford. CBA Group 9 *South Midlands Archaeology* 29, 79
- Mellor, M, 1984 A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century in TG Hassall et al, Excavations at St Ebbe's *Oxoniensia* 49, 181-219.
- Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* 59, 17-217
- OAU 2001 New University Clubhouse, Mansfield Road, Oxford: Archaeological Evaluation Report
- OA 2003 The King's Mound, Mansfield, Road, Oxford: Written Scheme of Investigation
- Parkinson, A, Barclay, A, and McKeague, P 1996 The excavation of two Bronze Age barrows, *Oxoniensia* 61, 41-64
- Poore, D and Wilkinson, D 2001 *Beaumont Palace and White Friars: excavations at the Sackler Library, Beaumont Street, Oxford*, Oxford Archaeological Unit Occasional Paper 9
- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*, (First edition, August 1992)

APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: New Oxford University Clubhouse

Site code: OXMAUC 03

Grid reference: SP 5175 0608

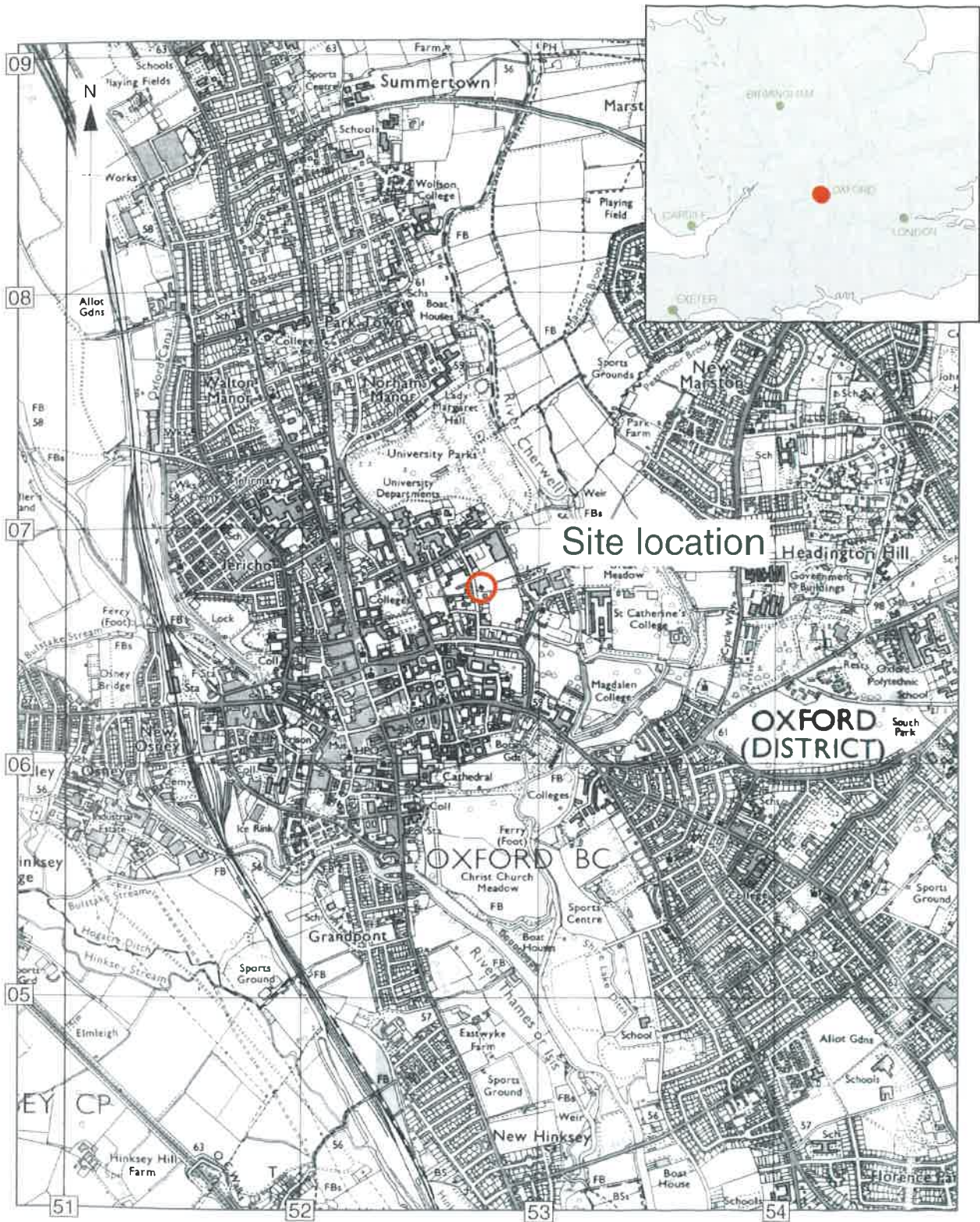
Type of watching brief: Demolition and ground reduction prior to construction

Date and duration of project: January - February 2003

Area of site: 0.25 ha

Summary of results: Civil War defensive ditch and associated bank

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: **2001.80**



Scale 1:25,000

Reproduced from the Explorer 1:25,000 scale by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 1992. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100005569

Figure 1: Site location

Section 305

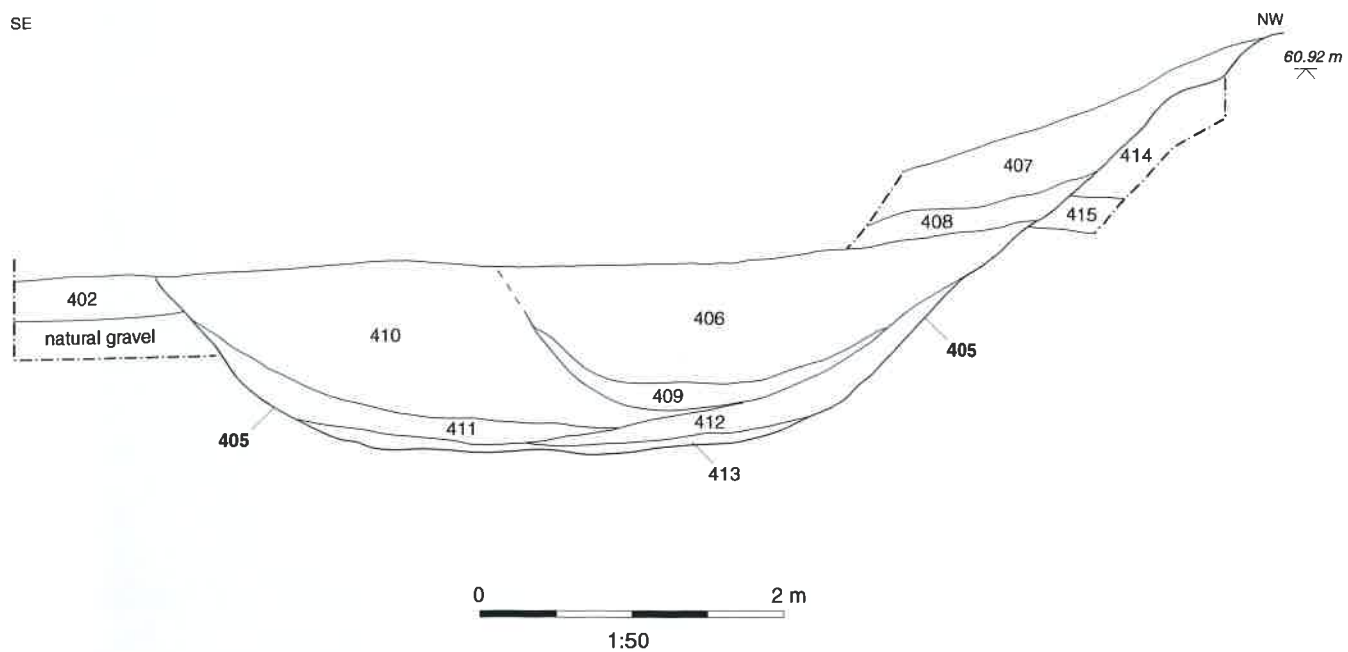


Figure 3: Section through Civil War ditch 405



Figure 4: Detail of northern end of Section 305



Figure 5: General view of ditch 405 and associated bank (south facing)



Oxford Archaeology

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 848666
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627

Registered Office:

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES